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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Wednesday, February 21, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "CHERRY NEWS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry and Engineering and the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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That story about George Washington and the cherry tree is only a legend historians say. But whether little George actually chopped the cherry tree or not, his name is firmly linked with cherries--so much so that National Cherry Week comes the same week as Washington's birthday.

But the Nation's favorite cherry dish dates back to even earlier times. People were singing: "Can she bake a cherry pie, Billy Boy?" years before George Washington could have gone out with his little hatchet. This early favorite, cherry pie, is still one of the most popular of all desserts. Bakers in this country report selling 50 million cherry pies a year. And that doesn't include the number of cherry pies baked at home each year. Nowadays when bakers and housewives have a choice of canned and frozen cherries in season and out, cherry pies are a year-round treat. Even on Washington's birthday when snow may cover the cherry trees, you can still celebrate with a fine cherry pie, thanks to different methods of preserving cherries.

The cherry crop in the United States each year averages some 130 thousand tons of fresh fruit. And here's how this crop is used. Some 65 thousand tons of cherries sell fresh. Around 40 thousand tons are canned. And 10 thousand tons are frozen. Fifteen thousand tons go to make maraschino cherries. And a thousand tons make miscellaneous products like candied cherries, and cherries pickled in brine, cherry preserves, and bottled cherry juice.

As evidence of the popularity of cherry pie in this country, 3 times as many

sour pie cherries are canned each year as sweet cherries for dessert use. The same holds true for frozen cherries. Many more sour pie cherries are frozen than sweet cherries, dark red and white cherries together. For frozen cherries as well as canned cherries are now the stock in trade of the pie industry.

Perhaps you are wondering what parts of the country supply these tons of cherries to the canners and the freezing plants. Practically all of the canned and frozen sweet cherries come from the western States of Washington, Oregon, and California. But New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Washington are the States that supply the bright red sour cherries. New York State freezes the largest pack of sour cherries and Michigan stands second. Most of the sour cherries are packed in 30-pound cans with sugar and frozen. The best sour variety for freezing is the Montmorency but early Richmond and English Morello are also frozen.

A small number of sweet cherries are frozen with sirup in individual packages for dessert use. The dark red Bing cherry and the Lambert as well as the white Royal Anne variety are favorites for this purpose.

Sour cherries are always pitted before freezing and canning. But the sweet cherries are frozen or canned with the pits in. This gives them a faintly almond flavor and makes them seem more like fresh fruit just off the tree. One freezing company in California has been freezing cherries with the stems on to make them seem even more like fresh fruit.

The cherry freezing industry grew up in New York State and Michigan during the twenties shortly after the World War. Cherries were packed in barrels or large cans, as they are now, and frozen in cold storage for bakers. It was not until the thirties--only about 10 years ago, that sweet cherries were quick-frozen in small packages for the retail trade. The pack of frozen sweet cherries is still very small compared to the pack of sour pie cherries.

The delicious dishes you can make with cherries--fresh, or frozen, or canned--are too many to mention. But here are a few of them to give you an idea.

If you want a delicious fruit relish to go with ham, try hot spiced cherries. Add a little vinegar and cinnamon to canned sweet cherries, and heat them. Serve hot. Pickled cherries are also delicious with meat.

Then for salad, try fresh or frozen white cherries with grapefruit on crisp lettuce. Use cream dressing or French dressing. White soft cream cheese or cottage cheese is good with red sweet cherries for salad. Remove the pits and stuff the cherries with the cream cheese. Cherries are also a favorite fruit for frozen fruit salad.

But it is at dessert that cherries are most popular. Cherry ice cream and cherry bisque ice cream are favorites. For a winter dessert there's that old-fashioned steamed pudding called cherry roly-poly that you serve with hard sauce or wine sauce. Have you ever tried hot cherry preserves over cake or ice cream? That's another good dessert. And have you ever tried folding chilled sweetened cherries in whipped cream? That's another delicious easy-to-make dessert.

But cherry pie holds first place after all. Just by way of celebrating Washington's birthday, suppose I give you the Bureau of Home Economics recipe for cherry pie: Put 4 cups of tart, juicy pitted cherries on the stove and let them simmer 5 minutes. Drain off the juice. When the juice cools, mix it with 2 tablespoons cornstarch. Cook until thickened. Then add the cherries, and 1 cup of sugar, and 2 tablespoons of butter, and a bit of salt--about an eighth of a teaspoon. Pour this hot cherry mixture into a pie crust you have already baked. Now lay twisted strips of dough across the top in lattice-fashion, or put on the top sheet of dough. Bake in a moderately hot oven from 375 to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Bake about half an hour until golden brown. Cherry pie made this way should have a crisp lower crust.

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